

CONTENTS

List of Maps xiv

Introduction 1

Why “Unofficial”? 1

- Declaration of Independence 1
- Dance to the Music 1
- The Importance of Being Goofy 2
- Honey, I Blew Up the Book! 3
- For Those Who Desire Additional Information 4
- The Death of Spontaneity 5
- A Word to Our Readers about Annual Revisions 6
- Corrections, Updates, and Breaking News 8
- We’ve Got Attitude 8
- The Sum of All Fears 9
- Too Many Cooks in the Kitchen? 9
- The *Unofficial* Team 11
- The How and the Why of It 11
- The *Unofficial Guide* Publishing Year 12
- Where’s the Index? 12
- Letters and Comments from Readers 12

Walt Disney World: An Overview 13

- What Walt Disney World Encompasses 13
- Disney-speak Pocket Translator 14
- The Major Theme Parks 14
- The Water Parks 17
- Other Walt Disney World Venues 17

PART ONE Planning before You Leave Home 24

Gathering Information 24

- PassPorter Guides 25
- Walt Disney World on the Web 25
- Important Walt Disney World Telephone Numbers 30
- This Year’s Buzz: Magical Beginnings 30

When to Go to Walt Disney World 30

- Selecting the Time of Year for Your Visit 30
- Extra Magic Hours 38
- Early Entry (aka Morning Extra Magic Hours) 40
- Summer and Holidays 42
- The Disney Calendar 44

VI CONTENTS

PART TWO Making the Most of Your Time and Money 47

Allocating Money 47

- Walt Disney World Admission Options 47
- Help Is on the Way! 48
- Magic Your Way 48
- Base-ticket Add-on Options 49
- Diz Spin 52
- Every Cloud Has a Polyester Lining 54
- Big Brother Is Watching 54
- How to Get the Most from the New Tickets 55
- Where to Purchase Magic Your Way Tickets 55
- For Additional Information on Passes 57
- Where the Real Deals Are 57
- Free Tickets and the Time-share Game 57
- The British Are Coming! 61
- More Discounts on Admissions 61
- Partially Used Passes Purchased before January 2005 61
- How Much Does It Cost per Day? 62

Allocating Time 63

- Which Park to See First 63
- Operating Hours 63
- Official Opening versus Real Opening 64
- The Vacation That Fights Back 64
- The Practicality of Returning to Your Hotel for Rest 65
- Arrival-day Blues: What to Do When You Have Only a Half Day 66
- Optimum Touring Situation 69
- The Cardinal Rules for Successful Touring 69
- What's a Queue? 72
- Of Utmost Importance: Read This! 72
- Touring Plans: What They Are and How They Work 73
- Overview of the Touring Plans 77
- Extra Magic Hours and the Touring Plans 85
- FASTPASS 85

Understanding Walt Disney World Attractions 92

- Cutting Your Time in Line by Understanding the Rides 94
- Cutting Your Time in Line by Understanding the Shows 97
- A Word about Disney Thrill Rides 97
- The Wonderful, the Wild, and the Wussy: Central Florida Roller Coasters 99

"Unheralded Treasures" Touring 104

- The Magic Kingdom 104
- Epcot 105
- Disney-MGM Studios 106
- Disney's Animal Kingdom 106

PART THREE Accommodations 108

The Basic Considerations 108

- The Tax Man Cometh 108
- About Hotel Renovations 109
- Benefits of Staying in the World 109
- Staying in or out of the World:
 - Weighing the Pros and Cons 111

The Disney Resorts 112

- Disney Resorts 101 112
- How to Get Discounts on Lodging 115
- Walt Disney World Lodging Areas 119

- Choosing a Walt Disney World Hotel 119
- Researching Walt Disney World Hotels 132
- Readers' 2007 Disney Resort Report Card 137
- Walt Disney World Hotel Profiles 139**
 - The Magic Kingdom Resorts 139
 - The Epcot Resorts 153
 - The Bonnet Creek Resorts 167
 - The Animal Kingdom Resorts 176
 - Independent Hotels of the Downtown Disney Resort Area 189
 - Camping at Walt Disney World 193
- How to Evaluate a Walt Disney World Travel Package 197**
 - Walt Disney Travel Company Magic Your Way Packages 198
 - DISNEY LODGING FOR LESS** 202–203
 - Number Crunching 204
 - Platinum Plan Reprise 205
 - Throw Me a Line! 205
 - Packages from a Different Perspective 205
- Hotels outside Walt Disney World 208**
 - Selecting and Booking a Hotel outside Walt Disney World 208
 - Driving Time to the Parks for Visitors Lodging outside Walt Disney World 209
 - Getting a Good Deal on a Room outside Walt Disney World 214
 - Condominiums and Vacation Homes 218
 - RENTING A VACATION HOME** 220–221
 - The Best Hotels for Families outside Walt Disney World 229
- Hotels and Motels: Rated and Ranked 238**
 - What's in a Room? 238
 - Room Ratings 238
 - A Word about Toll-free Telephone Numbers 241
 - The 30 Best Hotel Values 241
 - THE TOP 30 BEST DEALS** 242–243
 - HOW THE HOTELS COMPARE** 244–249
 - HOTEL INFORMATION CHART** 250–267
- PART FOUR Serenity Now! A Look at Disney-area Spas 268**
 - Spa Profiles 269
- PART FIVE The Disney Cruise Line 274**
 - The Mouse at Sea 274
 - The Ships 278
 - Cabins 279
 - Services and Amenities 280
 - Dining 280
 - Facilities and Entertainment 281
 - Children's Programs 282
 - Sports, Fitness, and Beauty 283
 - Castaway Cay 283
 - Rates 284
 - A Few Tips 285
- PART SIX Walt Disney World with Kids 286**
 - The Ecstasy and the Agony 286
 - Reality Testing: Whose Dream Is It? 287
 - Recommendations for Making the Dream Come True 287
 - About the *Unofficial Guide* Touring Plans 288
 - Stuff to Think About 299
 - Strollers 302

VIII CONTENTS

Lost Children 307

How Kids Get Lost 308

Disney, Kids, and Scary Stuff 310

The Fright Factor 311

SMALL-CHILD FRIGHT-POTENTIAL CHART 312–315

A Bit of Preparation 316

Attractions That Eat Adults 317

A Word about Height Requirements 318

Waiting-line Strategies for Adults with Young Children 318

The Disney Characters 324

Meeting Characters for Free 328

Character Dining 330

Character Dining: What to Expect 330

When to Go 331

CHARACTER-MEAL HIT PARADE 332–333

How to Choose a Character Meal 332

Getting an Advance Reservation at Cinderella's Royal Table 336

Other Character Events 340

Babysitting 340

Special Programs for Children 342

Birthdays and Special Occasions 344

PART SEVEN Special Tips for Special People 345

Walt Disney World for Singles 345

Walt Disney World for Couples 345

Weddings 345

Honeymoons and Vows Renewals 348

Romantic Getaways 348

Walt Disney World "At Large" 348

Walt Disney World for Expectant Mothers 349

More Tips for Moms 351

Walt Disney World for Seniors 351

Getting Around 353

Timing Your Visit 353

Lodging 353

Transportation 354

Senior Dining 354

Behind-the-scenes Tours 354

Walt Disney World for Disabled Guests 355

Visitors with Special Needs 356

Friends of Bill W. 359

Guests Who Don't Speak English 359

PART EIGHT Arriving and Getting Around 360

Getting There 360

Directions 360

The I-4 Blues 363

Sanford International Airport 363

Security at Orlando International Airport 363

Getting to Walt Disney World from the Airport 364

Disney's Magical Express 365

Renting a Car 369

Getting Oriented 374

A Good Map 374

Finding Your Way Around 374

How to Travel around the World (or The Real Mr. Toad's Wild Ride) 375

Transportation Trade-offs for Guests: Lodging outside Walt Disney World 375

All You Need to Know about Driving to the Theme Parks 375

Good Fuzz, Bad Fuzz 379

Sneak Routes 379

The Disney Transportation System 385

**DOOR-TO-DOOR COMMUTING TIMES TO AND FROM THE DISNEY RESORTS
AND PARKS 388–389****PART NINE Bare Necessities 393****Credit Cards and Money 393**

Credit Cards 393

Banking Services 393

A License to Print Money 393

Visiting More Than One Park in a Single Day 394

Problems and Unusual Situations 394

Attractions Closed for Repairs 394

Car Trouble 394

Gasoline 396

Lost and Found 396

Pal Mickey 396

Medical Matters 397

Sergeant Blisterblaster's Guide to Happy Feet 397

Rain 398

How to Lodge a Complaint with Disney 399

Services 400

Messages 400

Pet Care 400

Photopass 401

Excuse Me, but Where Can I Find . . . 402

PART TEN Dining in and around Walt Disney World 404**Dining outside Walt Disney World 404**

Take Out Express 405

Dining at Universal's CityWalk 405

WHERE TO EAT OUTSIDE WALT DISNEY WORLD 406–408

One Man's Treasure 409

Buffet and Meal Deals outside Walt Disney World 409

Dining in Walt Disney World 412

Getting It Right 413

Disney Dining 101 415

Advance Reservations—What's in a Name 415

Behind the Scenes at Advance Reservations 415

Getting Your Act Together 416

Dress 418

Smoking 418

Food Allergies and Special Requests 418

A Few Caveats 419

Walt Disney World Restaurant Categories 419

WALT DISNEY WORLD BUFFETS AND FAMILY-STYLE RESTAURANTS 420

Hard Choices 421

Full-service Dining for Families with Young Children 423

Quiet, Romantic Places to Eat 424

Fast Food in the Theme Parks 425

Disney Dining Suggestions 432

X CONTENTS

- The Magic Kingdom 432
- Epcot 434
- Disney-MGM Studios 437
- Animal Kingdom 439
- More Readers' Comments about Walt Disney World Dining 439

Counter-service Restaurant Mini-profiles 443

Walt Disney World Restaurants: Rated and Ranked 451

- Readers' Restaurant-survey Responses 451

WALT DISNEY WORLD RESTAURANTS BY CUISINE 452–455

Full-service Restaurant Profiles 456

PART ELEVEN The Magic Kingdom 494

Arriving 494

Getting Oriented 494

Starting the Tour 495

FASTPASS at the Magic Kingdom 496

Main Street, U.S.A. 496

Adventureland 500

Frontierland 503

Liberty Square 510

Fantasyland 512

Mickey's Toontown Fair 519

Tomorrowland 524

Live Entertainment in the Magic Kingdom 532

Parades 534

- Afternoon Parade 535
- Evening Parade(s) 536
- Parade Route and Vantage Points 536
- Vantage Points for Fireworks 537
- Leaving the Park after Evening Parades and Fireworks 537

Traffic Patterns in the Magic Kingdom 539

Magic Kingdom Touring Plans 541

- Choosing the Appropriate Touring Plan 542
- Magic Kingdom Touring-plan Companion 543
- The Single-day Touring Conundrum 543
- Preliminary Instructions for All Magic Kingdom Touring Plans 544
- What to Do if You Get Off-track 544
- Park-opening Procedures 544
- Before You Go 545
- Magic Kingdom One-day Touring Plan for Adults 545
- Authors' Selective Magic Kingdom One-day Touring Plan for Adults 545
- Magic Kingdom One-day Touring Plan for Parents with Young Children 545
- Magic Kingdom Dumbo-or-Die-in-a-Day Touring Plan for Parents with Young Children 546
- Magic Kingdom Two-day Touring Plan 547

PART TWELVE Epcot 548

Overview 548

- Operating Hours 548

Arriving 549

Getting Oriented 549

- The EPCOT Acronym 551

Future World 551

- Guest Relations 552

- The Seas with Nemo and Friends 551
- The Land Pavilion 557
- Imagination Pavilion 559
- Test Track Pavilion 541
- Wonders of Life Pavilion 563

World Showcase 569

- Mexico Pavilion 570
- Norway Pavilion 571
- China Pavilion 572
- Germany Pavilion 573
- Italy Pavilion 573
- United States Pavilion 574
- Japan Pavilion 575
- Morocco Pavilion 575
- France Pavilion 576
- United Kingdom Pavilion 576
- Canada Pavilion 577

Live Entertainment in Epcot 578

- The Best Ways to See *IllumiNations* 580
- IllumiNations* Cruise 584

Traffic Patterns in Epcot 584

Epcot Touring Plans 585

- Preliminary Instructions for All Epcot Touring Plans 586
- Epcot One-day Touring Plan 586
- Authors' Selective Epcot One-day Touring Plan 587
- Epcot Two-day Sunrise–Starlight Touring Plan 587
- Epcot Two-day Early-riser Touring Plan 587

PART THIRTEEN Animal Kingdom 588

Arriving 592

- Operating Hours 592

Getting Oriented 593

The Oasis 595

- A Word about Animal Kingdom Live Shows 596

Discovery Island 596

Camp Minnie-Mickey 598

Africa 600

- Rafiki's Planet Watch 603

Asia 605

DinoLand U.S.A. 612

Live Entertainment in the Animal Kingdom 616

Traffic Patterns in the Animal Kingdom 618

Animal Kingdom Touring Plans 619

- Before You Go 619
- Animal Kingdom "Not a Touring Plan"
Touring Plans 619
- Animal Kingdom One-day Touring Plan 619

PART FOURTEEN Behind the Scenes at Walt Disney World 620

Behind the Scenes at the Magic Kingdom 620

Behind the Scenes at Epcot 621

- Dive Quest 624
- Dolphins in Depth 624

XII CONTENTS

Epcot Seas Aqua Tour 624

Behind the Scenes at the Animal Kingdom 625

PART FIFTEEN Disney-MGM Studios, Universal Orlando, and SeaWorld 626

Disney-MGM Studios versus Universal Studios Florida 626

Disney-MGM Studios 629

The MGM Connection 632

Comparing Disney-MGM Studios with the Magic Kingdom and Epcot 632

How Much Time to Allocate 633

Disney-MGM Studios in the Evening 633

Arriving at Disney-MGM Studios 634

Getting Oriented at Disney-MGM Studios 634

Waiting-times Display 634

Disney-MGM Studios Attractions 635

Hollywood Boulevard 635

Sunset Boulevard 635

Live Entertainment at Disney-MGM Studios 654

Disney-MGM Studios Touring Plan 656

Before You Go 657

Disney-MGM Studios “Not a Touring Plan” Touring Plans 657

Disney-MGM Studios One-day Touring Plan 657

Universal Orlando 657

Lodging at Universal Orlando 660

Arriving at Universal Orlando 660

Early Entry and Universal Express 661

Singles Lines 663

Lockers 663

Universal, Kids, and Scary Stuff 663

Quitting Time 664

iVillage Live and Blue Man Group 664

Universal Studios Florida 665

Universal Studios Florida Attractions 669

Live Entertainment at Universal Studios 683

Universal Studios Florida Touring Plan 683

Buying Admission to Universal Studios Florida 683

Universal Studios Florida One-day Touring Plan 683

Universal’s Islands of Adventure 684

Beware of the Wet and Wild 685

Getting Oriented at Islands of Adventure 685

Islands of Adventure Attractions 688

Marvel Super Hero Island 688

Toon Lagoon 690

Jurassic Park 692

The Lost Continent 694

Seuss Landing 696

Islands of Adventure Touring Plan 698

Islands of Adventure One-day Touring Plan 698

SeaWorld 698

Discovery Cove 700

PART SIXTEEN The Water Parks 702

You’re Soaking in It! 702

Extra Magic Hours 702

Blizzard Beach 702**Typhoon Lagoon 705**

Shark Reef 707

Surf Pool 707

Wet 'n Wild 708

Body and Mat Slides 709

Raft and Tube Rides 710

Other Attractions 711

WakeZone 711

Typhoon Lagoon versus Blizzard Beach 712**When to Go 713****Planning Your Day at Disney Water Parks 714****PART SEVENTEEN Beyond the Parks 719****Downtown Disney 719**

Downtown Disney Marketplace 719

Pleasure Island 720

Disney's West Side 720

DisneyQuest 720

Disney's Wide World of Sports 723**The Disney Wilderness Preserve 724****Walt Disney World Speedway 725****Walt Disney World Recreation 725****Walt Disney World Golf 725****Golf beyond Walt Disney World 729**

Other Standout Courses in Orlando 731

The Best of the Rest 734

Miniature Golf 735**PART EIGHTEEN Shopping in and out of Walt Disney World 737****Hey, Big Spender 737**

Pin Mania 738

Shopping in Walt Disney World 739

Tips for Disney Shopping 739

I Need... 739

Downtown Disney 742

Epcot 746

Disney-MGM Studios 749

Animal Kingdom 750

The Magic Kingdom 750

Walt Disney World Resorts 752

Disney Water Parks 753

Disney Outlet Stores 753**Shopping beyond Walt Disney World 753**

Celebration 753

Universal CityWalk 754

International Drive 754

Outlets 755

Traditional Shopping 755

PART NINETEEN Nightlife in and out of Walt Disney World 757**Walt Disney World at Night 757**

In the Theme Parks 757

At the Hotels 757

XIV LIST OF MAPS

At Fort Wilderness Campground 758
At Disney's BoardWalk 758
At Downtown Disney 758
Walt Disney World Dinner Theaters 761
Other Area Dinner Theaters 764

Pleasure Island 764

Pleasure Island Touring Plan 768

Universal's CityWalk 770

CityWalk versus Pleasure Island 771

Appendix, Indexes, Touring Plans, and Reader Surveys 773

Readers' Questions to the Author 773

Readers' Comments 775

Accommodations Index 779

Restaurant Index 785

Subject Index 788

Touring Plans 811

Clip-out Touring-plan Companions

837

2008 *Unofficial Guide* Reader Survey

845

Walt Disney World Restaurant Survey

847

LIST of MAPS

South Orlando and Walt Disney World Area
20–21

Walt Disney World 22–23

Deluxe Resorts Room Diagrams 125

Disney Vacation Club Resorts

Room Diagrams 126

Moderate Resorts Room Diagrams 127

Value Resorts Room Diagrams 127

Fort Wilderness Log Cabin Diagram 128

Grand Floridian Resort & Spa 141

Polynesian Resort 143

Wilderness Lodge and Villas 147

Contemporary Resort 149

Shades of Green 152

Disney's Yacht Club and Beach Club

Resorts and Villas 155

BoardWalk Inn and Villas Resort 159

Swan and Dolphin Resorts 162

Caribbean Beach Resort 166

Saratoga Springs Resort & Spa 168

Old Key West Resort 171

Port Orleans French Quarter Resort 174

Port Orleans Riverside Resort 175

Animal Kingdom Lodge and Villas 177

Coronado Springs Resort 179

All-Star Resorts 182

Pop Century Resort 187

Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground
194–195

Hotel Concentrations around Walt
Disney World 210

International Drive Area 211

Lake Buena Vista Resort Area and the
I-4 Corridor 212

US 192–Kissimmee Resort Area 213

Rental-home Developments Near WDW
226–227

I-4 and Walt Disney World Area 361

Walt Disney World Touring and
Hotel Clusters 376–377

I-4 Sneak Routes 380

International Drive Area Sneak Routes 381

US 192–Kissimmee Area Sneak Routes 382

Magic Kingdom 498–499

Magic Kingdom Parade Route 535

Epcot 550

Where to View *IllumiNations* 581

Animal Kingdom 590–591

Disney-MGM Studios 630–631

Universal Orlando 658–659

Universal Studios Florida 666–667

Islands of Adventure 686–687

Downtown Disney 740–741

Pleasure Island 765